

25. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein the epoxy value of constituent (b) is from 0.1 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram.

26. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein the epoxy value of constituent (b) is at least 1.5 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram, and overall the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is at least 3.0.

27. (New) The matting agent of claim 26, wherein the epoxy value of constituent (b) is from 1.5 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram, and overall the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is at least 3.5.

28. (New) The matting agent of claim 24 or 25, wherein the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 0.4 to 30.

29. (New) The matting agent of claim 26 or 27, wherein the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 3.5 to 30.

30. (New) The matting agent of claim 26 or 27, wherein the ratio of epoxy equivalents of component (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 4 to 20.

31. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein the metal of constituent (a) is selected from the group consisting of magnesium, calcium, aluminium and zinc.

32. (New) The matting agent of claim 31, wherein the metal of constituent (a) is zinc.

33. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (a) is a salt or a complex of a carboxylic acid.

34. (New) The matting agent of claim 33, wherein the carboxylic acid is a mono- or di-carboxylic acid.

35. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (a) is a salt or a complex of a dimeric or oligomeric unsaturated fatty acid.

36. (New) The matting agent of claim 31, wherein the metal salt or complex is selected from the group consisting of aluminium or magnesium stearate, aluminium or zinc acetylacetonate, zinc methacrylate, zinc arachidate, zinc pentachlorothiophenolate or zinc 2-benzothiazole thiolate.

37. (New) The matting agent of claim 36, wherein the metal salt or complex is zinc 2-benzothiazole thiolate.

38. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (b) is selected from the group consisting of glycidyl (meth)acrylate homopolymers and glycidyl (meth)acrylate copolymers, where appropriate having different molecular weights and based on different comonomers, or a mixture of such compounds.

39. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (b) includes one or more polymers containing glycidyl ester groups and, optionally, glycidyl ether groups, and having an average molecular weight (M_n = number average from GPC measurement using polystyrene calibration) of from 1,000 to 30,000.

40. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (b) includes one or more polyglycidyl (meth)acrylate polymers or copolymers having an average molecular weight (M_n) in the range from 1,000 to 30,000.

41. (New) The matting agent of claim 40, wherein the average molecular weight (M_n) is in the range from 2,000 to 15,000.

42. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, wherein constituent (b) has a glass transition temperature (T_g ; determined by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute) in the range from 20°C to 120°C.

43. (New) The matting agent of claim 42, wherein the glass transition temperature is in the range from 40°C to 100°C.

44. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, which further comprises constituent (c), a natural or synthetic wax, or wax-like substance.

45. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, which further comprises one or more customary additives.

46. (New) The matting agent of claim 45, wherein the one or more customary additives are selected from the group consisting of fillers, light stabilizers, dyes, pigments, degassing agents, adhesive agents, thixotropic agents and flow agents.

47. (New) The matting agent of claim 24 in particle form, having an average particle size in the range from 0.015 μm to 1000 μm .

48. (New) The matting agent of claim 47, wherein the average particle size is from 5 μm to 500 μm .

49. (New) The matting agent of claim 24, in the form of a solid mixture, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt or a zinc complex of an organic compound; constituent (b) has from 0.1 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram; and wherein the matting agent optionally comprises a polyolefin wax.

50. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole.

51. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer.

52. (New) The matting agent of claim 51, wherein the glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer has a molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 2,000 to 15,000.

53. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein the polyolefin wax is a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C (measured by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute).

54. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of constituent (b) to metal equivalents of constituent (a) is from 0.4 to 30.

55. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole; constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer having a molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 2,000 to 15,000; optionally comprising a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C (measured by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute); and wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of constituent (b) to metal equivalents of constituent (a) is from 0.4 to 30.

56. (New) The matting agent of claim 49, wherein constituent (b) has from 1.5 to 8 equivalents of epoxy groups per kilogram; and wherein the overall ratio of epoxy equivalents of constituent (b) to metal equivalents of component (a) is from 3.5 to 30.

57. (New) The matting agent of claim 56, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole.

58. (New) The matting agent of claim 56, wherein constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer.

59. (New) The matting agent of claim 58, wherein the glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer has a molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 2,000 to 15,000.

60. (New) The matting agent of claim 56, optionally comprising a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C (measured by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute).

61. (New) The matting agent of claim 56, wherein constituent (a) is a zinc salt of mercaptobenzothiazole; constituent (b) is a glycidyl (meth)acrylate polymer or copolymer having a molecular weight (Mn) in the range from 2,000 to 15,000; optionally comprising a polyethylene wax having a melting point in the range from 50°C to 120°C (measured by DSC at a heating rate of 5°C/minute).

62. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 1 in a thermally curable system that comprises at least one carboxyl-containing polymer as binder; at least one epoxy-group-containing compound, or a mixture of an epoxy-group-containing compound and a hydroxyalkylamide compound, as hardener or cross-linking agent; and, optionally, an accelerator for the cross-linking reaction of the hardener with the carboxyl-containing polymer.

63. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 62, wherein the carboxyl-containing polymer is a carboxyl-terminated polyester and/or a carboxy-containing (meth)acrylate polymer.

64. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 62, wherein the matting agent is added in an amount of up to 20% by weight based on the total weight of binder and hardener in the thermally curable system.

65. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 66, wherein the matting agent is added in an amount of from 1 to 10% by weight.

66. (New) The use of a matting agent according to any one of claims 62-65, wherein the thermally curable system is a surface-coating composition.

67. (New) The use of a matting agent according to any one of claims 62-65, wherein the thermally curable system is a powder coating composition.

68. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 1 in a thermally curable system that comprises at least one carboxyl-containing polymer as binder; at least one epoxy-group-containing compound, or a mixture of an epoxy-group-containing compound and a hydroxyalkylamide compound, as hardener or cross-linking agent; and, optionally, an accelerator for the cross-linking reaction of the hardener with the carboxyl-containing polymer; and wherein the epoxy-group-containing compound does not include any glycidyl esters that have a molecular weight of up to and including 1500.

69. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 68, wherein the thermally curable system is a surface-coating composition.

70. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 69, wherein the thermally curable system is a powder coating composition.

71. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 2 in a thermally curable system that comprises at least one carboxyl-containing polymer as binder; at least one epoxy-group-containing compound, or a mixture of an epoxy-group-containing compound and a hydroxyalkylamide compound, as hardener or cross-linking agent; and, optionally, an accelerator for the cross-linking reaction of the hardener with the carboxyl-containing polymer, wherein the epoxy-group-containing compound is a mixture of a diglycidyl compound and a triglycidyl compound.

72. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 71, wherein the carboxyl-containing polymer is a carboxyl-terminated polyester and/or a carboxyl-containing polymer.

73. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 71, wherein the diglycidyl compound and triglycidyl compound are present in a ratio by weight of from 10:1 to 1:10.

74. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 73, wherein the ratio by weight is from 3:1 to 1:1.

75 (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 71, wherein the mixture of a diglycidyl compound and a triglycidyl compound is a mixture of diglycidyl terephthalate and triglycidyl trimellitate.

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76. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 71, wherein the thermally curable system is a surface-coating composition.

77. (New) The use of a matting agent according to claim 76, wherein the thermally curable system is a powder coating composition.

78 (New) A thermally curable system, especially a surface-coating composition, preferably a powder coating composition, that comprises at least one carboxyl-containing polymer, preferably a carboxyl-terminated polyester and/or a carboxyl-containing (meth)acrylate, and at least one epoxy-group-containing compound or a mixture of an epoxy-group-containing compound and a hydroxyalkylamide compound as hardener or cross-linking agent and, optionally, an accelerator for the cross-linking reaction of the hardener with the carboxyl-containing polymer, which system comprises a matting agent according to claim 1.

79. (New) A fully cured system according to claim 78.

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, new claims 24-79 will be pending. Original claims 1-23 have been cancelled. The new claims contain the same subject matter as the original claims, having been rewritten merely to eliminate multiple dependencies and to conform to customary U. S. claim drafting style. Accordingly, new claims 24-79 contain no new matter.

In view of the foregoing amendments, the claims are now in better condition for examination on the merits.